

REMARKS

Claims 35-47 remain pending in the application including independent claim 35. New claims 49-52 have been added including independent claim 50.

Please note that the original listing of claims included two (2) claim 46s. The second claim 46 has been renumbered as claim 47 and claim 47 has been renumbered as claim 48.

The drawings stand objected to for not showing the rigid member attachment interfaces. Figure 4 has been revised to show that the first end 44 of the plate 42 is attached to the material that forms a portion of the seat belt 22, as described at paragraph [46]. Figure 4 has also been revised to show that the second end 48 of the plate 42 is mounted to a vehicle structure 62 as described at paragraph [48]. A replacement set of drawing sheets is being submitted with the present amendment. No new matter has been added.

The specification is objected to because the examiner argues that it is unclear how the rigid member is attached to the male or female members of the seat belt. The seat belt includes belt material that is attached to both the male and female members of the seat belt 22 as known. If the first end 44 of the plate is looped to the seat belt material and the second end 48 is attached to a vehicle structure, such as the B-pillar for example, than the rigid member 42 would clearly be associated with the male portion 30 of the seat belt assembly. If the first end 44 of the plate is looped to the seat belt material and the second end 48 is attached to a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle floor via hard mounting of the latch mechanism 32 to the seat 12 for example, than the rigid member 42 would be associated with the female portion 34. See paragraphs [44]-[48]. Applicant asserts that the specification is not unclear, however, in order to facilitate matters, paragraph [46] has been amended to clarify the attachment relationships. No new matter has been added.

Claims 35-47 stand objected to because the examiner argues that it is unclear how the rigid member is attached to the male or female members of the seat belt 22. For the reasons set forth above, applicant asserts that the attachment relationships are clearly defined within

the claims and specification. Further, please note that the claims do not recite that the rigid member is directly attached to the male or female members.

Claims 35-36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki (US 6264236) in view of Steffens, Jr. Claims 37-47 do not stand rejected under any prior art.

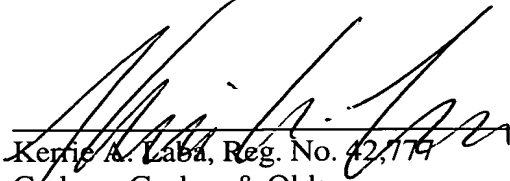
The recited combination does not disclose suggest or teach the claimed features. Claim 35 recites a rigid member attached to one of the male or female members that has a first end for supporting a seat belt portion and a second end for attachment to a vehicle structure and including a seat belt force sensor that is mounted on the rigid member between the first and second ends. Aoki does not disclose such a configuration. The examiner refers to Figure 2a but does not provide any detailed arguments indicating which features of Figure 2a correspond to the claimed features.

Aoki discloses a buckle body 11, a latch 12, and a tongue plate 13. A strain gage 14 is mounted to the latch 12 and a circuit substrate 15 is separately mounted to the buckle body 11. The examiner has not identified which of the buckle body 11, latch 12, or tongue plate 13 corresponds to applicant's claimed rigid member. Applicant respectfully requests clarification of the examiner's arguments relating to the Aoki reference.

Claim 36 requires the weight sensors to be mounted between the seat frame and a seat mount that is attached to the vehicle floor. Aoki teaches mounting sensors 21 directly to the floor (Figures 4a and 4b). Thus, Aoki does not disclose the features of claim 36.

Applicant asserts that all claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests an indication of such. Applicant believes that no additional fees are necessary, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482 in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,


Kerie A. Laba, Reg. No. 42,174
Carlson, Gaskey & Olds
400 W. Maple Road, Ste. 350
Birmingham, MI 48009
(248) 988-8360

Dated: July 22, 2005

CERTIFICATE OF MAIL

I hereby certify that the enclosed Response is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on this 22 day of July, 2005


Laura Combs